

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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R 100830Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8883
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0036

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR VM
SUBJECT: BELGIAN DIPLOMAT COMMENTS ON VIET NAM

1. DURING A TRAIN TRIP FROM NONG KHAI TO BANGKOK THE EVENING OF JANUARY 3, THE CHARGE HAD OCCASION TO TALK WITH GEORGE VILLAIN, BELGIAN AMBASSADOR TO VIET NAM. VILLAIN WAS ON HIS WAY TO BANGKOK WITH HIS THREE CHILDREN RETURNING TO THEIR MOTHER IN BRUSSELS.

2. VILLAIN SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE UNDERGOING SEVERE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. NEVERTHELESS, THEY WERE STILL RIDING THE CREST OF A WAVE OF CONFIDENCE FOLLOWING THEIR VICTORY, AS THEY SAW IT, OVER THE UNITED STATES. VILLAIN SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE RIGID, DOCTRINAIRE, AND WERE NOT ABOUT TO CHANGE THEIR VIEW THAT THEY HAD THE CORRECT FORMULA FOR NATIONAL SURVIVAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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3. VILLAIN SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP WAS AGING AND THAT VIET NAM WOULD SOON FACE A SUCCESSION PROBLEM. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT THE ARMY WAS THE MOST LOGICAL SOURCE FOR ANY NEW LEADERSHIP. ASKED IF THE SOLDIERS WOULD PERHAPS BE MORE PRAGMATIC THAN THE CURRENT MORE DOCTRINAIRE POLITICIANS, VILLAIN

SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE MILITARY'S POST-"VICTORY"
EUPHORIA WOULD MAKE THEM JUST AS DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH.

4. THE CHARGE ASKED VILLAIN HOW THE CURRENT OR ANY
PROSPECTIVE FUTURE VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP WOULD REACT TO
THE CONTINUED LACK OF ANY REAL SUCCESS BY THE VIETNAMESE-
BACKED ELEMENTS OF THE THAI INSURGENCY. VILLAIN INDI-
CATED THAT THE SITUATION COULD BE DANGEROUS IN THE LONG
RUN. FRUSTRATION OVER THE FAILURE OF THE INSURGENCY TO
ACQUIRE ANY REAL MOMENTUM COULD PROMPT HANOI AT LEAST
TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONVENTIONAL ATTACK ON
THAILAND SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH THEY HAD APPARENTLY
LAUGHED AGAINST CAMBODIA.

5. COMMENT: VILLAIN'S JANUARY 3 COMMENTS AR NOT
PARTICULARLY CONSISTENT WITH HIS NOVEMBER 1 COMMENTS
(BANGKOK A-249) THAT THE PRAGMATISTS WERE IN THE
ASCENDENCY IN THE SRV. OUR TRAIN-BORNE CONVERSATION
SEEMED COMPLETELY SPONTANEOUS, HOWEVER, AND EVEN THOUGH
THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO LAOS WAS PRESENT THE WHOLE
TIME, VILLAIN GAVE NO INDICATION THAT HE WAS DISSEMBLING
OR TRYING TOSELL A PARTICULAR POINT OF VIEW. IN
ADDITION, THE CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE BORDER CONFLICT HAD
BROKEN OUT SUBSEQUENT TO HIS NOVEMBER 1 COMMENTS.
ROBERTS

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NNN

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